An important factor in the tribal system of the Masai is the presence of medicine-men whose duties are in general connected with the divination of future events, with the administration of drugs, and with the practice of witchcraft. There appear to be three grades of medicine-men, whose spheres of influence are divided into these three categories, but, for practical purposes, it is only necessary to consider the position of the first grade, represented by the person of the Laibon, or "Ol-oiboni," who is the Chief Medicine-Man of the tribe. The history of the Laibons is recorded in Mr. Hollis' book on the Masai, pp. 324-330, and it is unnecessary to enter into it here, but it may be mentioned that Mbatian, who died about 1890, and Lenana, his son and successor, acquired such great influence over all sections of the Masai that the position of Laibon came to be regarded by certain of the European officers who had not carefully investigated the facts of the case, as synonymous with that of a paramount chief. It does not appear, however, that the Laibons have ever attempted to assume a position resembling that of kings of native tribes, and the appointment by Government of Lenana, and, at his death, of his son Seggi, to the office of Paramount Chief of the Masai was, in fact, the result of a misunderstanding of the normal state of affairs which steps have now been taken to rectify.

The Laibons

The process displayed by the pastoral Masai "Morus" in raids on surrounding tribes combined with their ceaseless activity in following this pursuit made their name dreaded throughout East Africa and hindered for many years the passage of caravans by the direct route from Uganda to the Coast. When eventually Europeans penetrated the highlands of British East Africa, they found the Masai with their flocks and herds scattered over a wide area. The story of how they were eventually concentrated in one reserve is told in Chapter III., but it is necessary to draw attention here to the effect which this concentration, combined with the introduction of veterinary skill and the cessation of raiding by and against them, had on the Masai. In 1904, before any administrative limit had been placed on the movements of the tribe, it was estimated that the Masai possessed 50,000 head of cattle. In 1911, 90,000 head were said to be in the Northern Reserve alone, and this estimate was subsequently increased to 200,000 when the raids which were attempting to move south had been more thoroughly examined. 50,000 head of cattle moved south in 1911, but in the final move from Laikipia in 1912 and 1913, nearly 200,000 head were counted. By March 1914 all the Masai herds being located in one reserve, the total estimate for the tribe had leaped up to 600,000 and the number of cattle in the possession of the Masai is now supposed to be in the neighbourhood of three-quarters of a million. These latter figures are the estimates of Mr. R. W. Hemsted, who has been the Officer-in-Charge of the Masai Reserve for more than five years, and, in spite of the objection taken by the Masai on superstitious grounds to the counting of their stock, they must be taken to be substantially accurate. It is scarcely reasonable to suppose that the earlier figures, particularly the first two mentioned, are in any way so exact, but, after allowances have been made for this, it is obvious that an enormous increase in stock has taken place. In addition to this cattle, the Masai are said to possess something over two million sheep and ten thousand donkeys. The stock-carrying capacity of the 14,600 square miles included within the borders of the Masai Reserve, is limited to a certain extent by the aversion shown by the natives to grazing cattle in areas which from past experience they believe to be infected by disease, and, in parts of the Reserve, land which appears to be admirably suited for stock remains untenanted on that account, no attempt having been made to utilize veterinary skill and treatment in rendering their cattle immune from the disease. With the exception of these areas, the Reserve may fairly be said to be stocked to its fullest capacity, and the Masai, who number all told about 42,000 souls, possess capital to an average amount of rather more than £110 per head. They are thus, in all probability, the richest uncivilized tribe in the world. It is not surprising, therefore, considering their conception of manual labour as degrading, the limitations of their personal requirements and their immense wealth in livestock, to find that they are unwilling to work for wages as do the members of other tribes. Their national diet is meat and milk, both of which they have in plenty, and they can procure any other food or commodity they desire by sale or barter of stock.

The Morus or Andorobos

In his reply, dated the 3rd of December, 1913, the Secretary of State observed that in his opinion the time had not yet arrived when it was either necessary or desirable to impose a cattle tax on the Maori which might be thought by them to be the object or a consequence of the Maori wars. The Secretary of State, 3rd December, 1913. 641*

In a despatch to the Secretary of State, dated the 6th of March, 1914, the Governor remarked that a review of the present system of native taxation would no doubt be necessary in the near future, but he considered that this was not a matter of urgency and might profitably be held over until the reorganization of native administration had been effected. The Secretary of State agreed that the question might well be deferred. Sir Henry Galbraith, 6th March, 1914.

On the 28th of July, 1914, Sir Henry Galbraith wrote that he considered the time had come when a tax should be imposed on the cattle belonging to the pastoral tribes on the ground that the preventive taken by Government to prevent the spread of disease had resulted there in largely increasing the number of their herds. He desired that the incidence of taxation should be such as to encourage agricultural industry and discourage pastoral pursuits. He therefore appointed a Committee, consisting of Messrs. Ainsworth (Chairman), McClellan, E. G. Sherrard and Northcroft, to consider the subject. Owing, however, to the outbreak of war, the sittings of the Committee were delayed and were in fact never held. Sir Henry Galbraith, 28th July, 1914.

Mr. Ainsworth considered the question in December, 1914, and the first three months of 1915, and submitted a report on the general question of native taxation on the 29th of April, 1915. In that part of his report which dealt with the Maori Reserves, he considered that the Maori in the Maori Reserves possessed, as regards occupation and location, a totally different problem from that encountered in considering the case among agricultural tribes in the Provinces. The Maori were pastoralists, whose mode of life, customs and requirements differed from those of agricultural natives. They required much more land than agriculturists, and had many fewer inhabitants to the square mile. Mr. Ainsworth, 29th April, 1915.

Statistics of the Maori Reserves estimated the population at 32,000 souls, the number of horned stock at 600,000 head, and of sheep and goats at 2,000,000 head, while the area of the reserves was approximately 4,000,000 acres. The annual taxes paid by the Maori amounted to Rs. 20,000 only. Mr. Ainsworth quoted, in comparison, the case of three agricultural districts, whose total area was 2,100,000 acres, whose population was 600,000 souls, and which paid Rs. 600,000 in land and poll tax. [41] [31] [131]

The capitalized value of Maori stock was so large as to make the natives worth about Rs. 600 per man, woman and child, and, supposing that the capital amount formed even but 5 per cent. per annum, the annual earnings of the tribe would be worth Rs. 47 per head. The total personal wants were very small, while they paid less than one rupee each in annual taxes. It was therefore evident that the Maori did not contribute their fair share to the Provincials revenue, and that some readjustment was necessary in their case. [154]

In regard to the manner in which the Maori should be taxed, Mr. Ainsworth observed that their nomadic habits and mode of holding lands rendered the method of collecting revenue under a land assessment a far more difficult matter than it was in the case of agricultural tribes. He also considered that any system of poll tax on able-bodied males would be equally unsatisfactory. He therefore proposed a scheme which had been put forward by Mr. Sherrard and which he outlined as follows:—

In order to find out the approximate taxable value of the Maori, the tax should be worked out on a percentage, based on the assumed unimproved value of the land. The amount due would be collected in the form of a cattle tax (ignoring sheep and goats). The acreage of the reserves being nine million acres, the unimproved value being assessed to be Rs. 3 per acre, a tax of 1 per cent. on the unimproved value would produce a revenue of Rs. 270,000. This amount would be divided amongst the total number of cattle estimated, and would amount to 24 cents. per head on half a million head of cattle. Mr. Ainsworth considered that there would be considerable difficulty in counting the cattle, and suggested

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

/91 cont./

The earnings of the men who are growing up to become warriors consist of captured livestock and in the main passes into the father's herd. Actual expenses goods for the individual members of the family are only clothing and ornaments, for the men also their weapons, and further for boys the livestock given to them by the father, for youths and warriors the share of the captured cattle which they keep for themselves.

The family head is the father of the family. If an older man of his family also lives with him or in the same or a closely neighboring kraal, the two share in the office of the head in such a manner that in all decisions people listen to and heed the counsel of the older one. Legally the head can be deposed by his brethren for mismanagement and incompetence, but this seems to take place only very exceptionally. The head makes the decisions in all family matters. A right to kill and possess the members does not belong to the father of the family: just as he is not responsible for their debts and misdeeds, neither may he sell or pledge them. The fact that during the famine caused by two cattle epidemics that followed each other in a short time around the year 1890 children and women were given into slavery by their relatives does not prove anything to the contrary. When the corpses of many thousands of the starved lay in the steppes and there was no food of any kind for the survivors, no escape remained for them other than to give themselves or their relatives as serfs to such people as could feed them.

Individual members may detach themselves on account of bad treatment. One who detaches himself flees to another of his lineage or to the one from which his mother came and purchases his admission with a few cattle that he has stolen from his father's herd and taken along. If he found acceptance in the latter, he must return to his own as soon as he becomes a father.

If a girl is expelled, she may freely choose her future abode, irrespective of tribe or lineage. Wherever she finds admittance /91/ she usually remains permanently, in that she marries a member of this lineage. That is, the men and girls taken in remain members of the lineage, despite their admission, so that they can enter into a legal marriage with members of the lineage concerned.